

CATEGORY L

HEARING AND BALANCE (ENT Problems)

1. Drivers of private vehicles: No hearing requirements have been set up.
2. Commercial Intrastate drivers are required to pass a hearing test. They may be tested either without an aid or with a hearing aid if ordinarily used and are acceptable if:
 - ◆ They perceive a forced whispered voice in the better ear at not less than five feet;
 - OR,
 - ◆ If tested by use of an audiometric device, they do not have an average hearing loss in the better ear greater than 65 decibels at 500 Hz, 1000 Hz and 2000 Hz. (American Standard Z 24.5 - 1951). It is suggested that, if a driver does not pass the whisper test and there is no correctable abnormality such as wax accumulation, arrangements be made for an audiogram.
 - ◆ For both commercial intrastate and private vehicle operation, certain conditions may have an impact on safe driving. These include chiefly those affecting balance, such as Meniere-s disease or other disorders affecting the ear as in various otolarygologic (ENT) conditions. Although a careful history may be adequate to reach conclusions, in some cases special studies may be appropriate.
3. **BALANCE:** Sudden vertigo (the subjective feeling of movement, either of self or environment, where none is present; may feel like swaying or pushing, but usually feels like spinning) can occur unpredictably in certain disorders of the inner ear and its connections to the brain. This vertigo is often provoked or aggravated by head movements, but may also occur spontaneously.

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is a common problem of this sort. Meniere-s disease is a rare cause. Infections of the inner ear (AVestibular Neuronitis@or ALabyrinthitis@) are another possible reason for vertigo. When present, the acute or active experience of vertigo usually persists only for minutes at a time, but may be severely incapacitating, with associated nausea, vomiting, poor coordination, difficulty with visual focusing and even syncope (fainting). Repeated experiences of vertigo may occur for periods of days to weeks at a time, during which time driving may not be safe, since movement of the head to look at external or internal rear view mirrors, or to look over a shoulder, may unpredictably trigger sudden vertigo. Special medical tests may be required to evaluate the cause of vertigo and to help decide how best to treat it.

